

# **Connect**

*supporting student participation*

**Number 198**  
**December 2012**

ABN: 98 174 663 341

- **Student Voice:**

*Asking, Listening, Taking Action*

- **Primary Student Voices:**

*JSC Congresses in Victoria*

- **VISTA; VicSRC; NSW State SRC**

- **Justice Citizens:**

*Youth Participatory Action Research and Video-Making*

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- *VicSRC Congress Report*
- *Draft Student Voice Rubric*
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## Cover:

*A speaker at the JSC Congress, Ballarat*  
*Photos on pages 1, 3 and 4 by Sarah Lynch*

## Why does *Connect* exist?

*Connect* has been published bi-monthly since 1979.

*It aims to:*

- document student participation approaches and initiatives;
- support reflective practices;
- develop and share resources.

## Connect:

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# This Issue:

Well, that's 33 years up! Though it only seems yesterday that we walked round a table, stapling roneoed pages of *Connect* 1 together. And 198 issues later, we're still here!



Some of the terminology has changed, but I suspect that, in essence, the issues remain: how can we develop authentic and respectful partnerships in learning, that recognise that all young people are competent, but that none (of us all) are competent enough. That's what education can be about: learning and growing together.

The challenge is then not one of 'motivating' students of 'engaging' them or even of 'giving them a voice'. Rather what faces us is the need to identify what kills motivation, what disengages, what leads to us to not listen - or to listen selectively. And then to do something about those causes. As always, I am convinced that our focus must be on the structures and practices, and not on the people involved. After all, it's going to be a lot harder to change people than to change structures or practices.

So it has been useful recently in working with some students, to introduce them to a 'five whys' activity: asking deeper and deeper questions ... not accepting first responses, but asking: "and why is that happening?" ... again and again. "It could get pretty annoying," said one student. Yep: but you can play it as a 'game' or an 'exercise', and make it a useful 'thinking together' tool.

Students easily understand the analogies: going upstream to stop who or whatever is throwing the drowning person into the river; building the barrier at the top of the cliff rather than sending the ambulance to the bottom. These stories resonate.

And the other exercise that resonates is a challenge to think of ways in which students (and others too) can raise issues or requests so that it doesn't even permit the other person to say 'no'. For example, if you approach someone and ask: "Can you please ...?", you then allow the possibility of 'no'. How can you step round that? I've been leaving people to stew on it for a while - no easy answers here. I might come back to you in 2013 about that!

In this, the 198th issue of *Connect* (two more issues before we no longer have to walk around the metaphorical table, with metaphorical stapler in hand, but simply e-mail *Connect* to you for free - see page 18) we draw upon some Australian and international sources. If the issues remain fairly constant, some of the labels change: **Keith Heggart's** focus continues to be on Civics and Citizenship Education, and the *Justice Citizens* project at his school has a solid foundation in student participation principles, where young people investigate and produce public resources around critical issues in their communities. Primary school student voices come clearly from the *JSC Congresses* held across Victoria, and **David Mould** reports on decisions made here, as students grapple with issues about the futures of their communities.

Elsewhere we reproduce summaries of *Student Voice* initiatives in the US, and review a substantial *Student Voice Handbook* from the UK. Enough to keep you busy reading over the holidays I suspect.

See you in 2013, as we wind down (or up) to *Connect* 200.

**Roger Holdsworth**

**Next Issue: #199: February 2013**  
**Deadline for material: end of January, 2013**

# Justice Citizens

## *A Youth Participatory Action Research Project focused on Citizenship and Social Justice*



The *Justice Citizens Project* was a project run in a medium sized Catholic systemic high school in Sydney's Western suburbs. It drew from a critical pedagogical framework, as well as community cultural development ideas, and took the form of a *FilmVoice* project that took place over 6 months and involved more than 100 Grade 9 students. These students were challenged to investigate a local or global community issue and then create a film based on social justice relating to this issue. The topics included refugees, racism, teen pregnancy, dirt bike safety, bullying and pollution in the Nepean River. These films were then shown at the first annual film festival, where students, participants and community members came together to discuss social action in the face of these issues.

### Context of Student Voice, Civics and Citizenship

Before starting to discuss the *Justice Citizens* project, it is important to explain the context for the project. This will perhaps go a little way towards explaining my interest in this topic. I've been a teacher for more than a decade now and for as long as I've been a teacher, I've been interested in notions of student voice and civics and citizenship.

It seems like my interest in this topic is mirrored in a growing interest - from educators, policymakers, students themselves and even politicians - about how education contributes to the development of active citizens. For example, in Australia, one of the National Goals for Schooling is the development of an 'active and informed citizenry' (MCEECDYA, 2007). Nor is Australia alone: in the last decade of the 20th Century, countries as disparate as England, South Korea and the USA were all in the process of reviewing the provision of civics and citizenship education.

Part of the reason that this field is so interesting is because it is what might be politely called a confused and contested field. **Civics and Citizenship Education** in Australia and around the world has been conflated with human rights education, patriotic education, education for democracy, education for digital

citizenship and other similar ideas. It can be challenging for an educator or a student to navigate these muddy waters.

What makes this navigation even more confusing is the fact that young people themselves are often confused about their feelings in regards to civics and citizenship. This confusion can take the form of these young people holding two or more competing or conflicting ideas about the role of democracy and civics in their lives. For example, recent research has indicated that young people these days are more connected than ever before, with global networks, but also more fearful of these global connections. Young people are also more disengaged from the formal political process, but are often galvanised over political issues. For example, in Australia, membership of political parties is lower than it has been in recent history, but young people will embrace issues that they see as important - like marching to end the war in Iraq. Finally, young people, despite the evidence of an issue-based agenda, are often characterised as either being ignorant or apathetic of their own rights and responsibilities (Harris, Wyn and Younes, 2008).

If that's what young people think generally about their world, what does the research tell us they think about school? The evidence here is even more

disturbing. When questioning students' understandings of their rights, and their feelings about school, Priscilla Alderson (1999) found this out:

- Less than 20% of students feel their rights are respected at school
- Only 25% of students think teachers believe what they say
- Less than 20% of students think that their school councils are useful
- Only 15% of students think their teachers listen to them.

### Education Factors

In my opinion, the main problems with education in Australia, and perhaps around the world, can be reduced to three main factors: **relevance, engagement and technology.**

Too much of the curriculum in schools is based on outdated models of knowledge and understanding. There is too much emphasis on remembering things and not enough emphasis placed on analysis and evaluation. Admittedly, we are not at the Dickensian model of education, with a 'Gradgrindian' insistence on facts, facts, facts, but it is important to ask ourselves: how far have we travelled from the 19th century model of education? Most schools still have bells. Students are rigidly ordered and uniformed. Subjects are still divided arbitrarily into 50 minute or 60 minute blocks. Students sit in rows, in silence for the most part. The teacher stands at the front of the classroom and speaks for extended periods of time.

And what is the point of this? The model itself was derived from the requirements for an individual working in an industrial economy. That's not the case anymore - at least in modern Western democracies. It should seem strange, but it isn't often questioned, that the exact same skills that we prize amongst students at school - skills like obedience, conformity, presentability and silence - are the kinds of skills that lack relevance to living and working in a 21st century post-industrial democratic nation.



The second problem is one of **engagement**. Although it might be hard to admit it, we must acknowledge that students today are fundamentally different to students even 20 years ago. The pace of change in the 21st Century continues to accelerate at an unthinkable pace. Children growing up today are different from children growing up in the 60s, 70s or even 80s. In the words of Sir Ken Robinson, they are living in the most intensely stimulating times in history. They are bombarded by more than 6000 advertising images every single day.

And we wonder why we, as teachers, struggle to keep their attention. It's hard to blame students for being less than enthused about Shakespeare or Romantic Poetry. It's too far removed from their experience. Why are some topics seen as privileged forms of information, but others aren't? Who decided that Romantic Poetry was more important than Hip Hop? Who decided that writing assessments was more important than making a film about them? Where are the questions about students' lives and futures? Where are the discussions about what is important to young people? Why are student voices so absent from schools?

The final reason is linked to the first two: many of the problems related to education are rooted in the fact that **technology** has fundamentally altered the way that we live our lives. One simple example that demonstrates how this is different is the way that the price of data storage has changed over time. Forty years ago, to store 1 GB of data would have cost you more than a million dollars. Now, it'll cost you less than 10 cents. And, perhaps even more surprisingly, you don't even need a physical hard drive anymore; there are range of cloud-based storage solutions that provide free storage space.

Schools have been incredibly slow to move to embrace this idea of technology and the way that it affects society. Let me give you some statistics from the Horizon Report (Johnson *et al*, 2010) to show you what I mean:

- More than 70% of students aged 0-5 use a mobile phone on a daily basis.
- Pearson reaches 9 million students every year via online materials.
- 80% of the children aged 0-5 use the internet at least once a week.
- By 2016, 35% of textbooks sold in the US will be digital.

- 40% of students in the UK have used a mobile phone to complete an assignment – even though it was banned.

## Influences on The Justice Citizens Project

So what does this mean for education? In considering how education, and my own practice, might deal with these issues, I have been influenced by three different educationalists. **John Dewey**, writing at the turn of the 20th Century, emphasised a different model of learning to the one that was common in schools at the time. Among a lot of other ideas, Dewey suggested that the purpose of schooling was at least as much socialisation and learning to be a part of society as it was gaining skills required for jobs. In addition, Dewey advocated a different method of schooling, too. Although he never used the term, his model has become associated with experiential education – that is, students need to experience real life problems and issues, rather than learn in what he saw as the aseptic environment of schools. Dewey was, in many ways, trying to tear down the artificial barriers between schools and communities (Dewey, 1916).

**Paulo Freire** was a Brazilian educator who did some incredibly important work in 1970s Brazil with illiterate peasants. Freire emphasized that education needed to be more than what he called 'the banking model'. In this form of education, Freire argued that students were seen as 'empty vessels' and knowledge was deposited into these students-as-objects by the all-knowing teacher. Freire argued, instead, for a 'problem-posing model' of education. In this kind of model, students are subjects in their own learning, capable of using their own knowledges and skills. In this context, teachers as students and students as teachers work together, and education becomes the practice of humanisation and freedom (Freire, 1970).

The final influence is **Seymour Papert**. Papert is well-known in both mathematical and educational circles. He invented the LOGO programming language, and investigated the way that technology can affect children's learning. Principally, he argued that children can learn advanced mathematical concepts through engagement with technology and problem-solving education (Papert, 1993).

## The Justice Citizens Project

The *Justice Citizens FilmVoice* project was based on these principles; that is, I took the learning from each of these educators in an effort to develop a model of education that addressed the issues of relevance, engagement and technology. In order to do this, I decided that *Justice Citizens* would have three main principles: firstly, it would **address real world problems**. Secondly, there would be **community partnerships**. Finally, there would be a heavy emphasis on **appropriate use of educational technology**.

*Justice Citizens* ran for six months and over more than 15 hour-long lessons during the first half of 2012. It should be noted that these were only the planned timetabled lessons; numerous groups of students gave up time after school and even on the weekend to complete their project, so enthusiastic were they. In fact, that was one of the more obvious findings – the fact that *Justice Citizens* was extremely motivational for the majority of Year 9.

Every student in Year 9 took part in the project. During the course of the sessions, students learnt basic research and interviewing skill, how to shoot and edit film, and how to critically analyse other student's films. These skills were delivered by community cultural development organisations invited into the school for that express purpose. This addressed one of the principles – the idea of community partnerships. We were able to work with Penrith City Council as well as local press and journalists to aid the students in developing the skills necessary for the project.

Throughout this process, the idea of student decision-making was constantly emphasised. Rather than having a set curriculum, students were invited to select the issues that they were going to focus on – and the range of subjects they chose was quite diverse. Films were made about things like: school bags, local politics, bullying, racism, refugees, teen pregnancy and much more. This was the most refreshing part of the whole process for me: I was worried that students would simply not have anything to say – but I was proven very wrong here. The range of topics that students wanted to talk about was immense – in fact, some students even made more than one film – such was the wealth of the topics they wanted to explore.

This part of the project addressed two of the goals. Not only did the students have a chance to formulate their own curriculum based on the real world problems they were seeking to address, and explore issues that they felt were important in their lives and communities, but students also had the opportunity to speak with local community members about these issues. For example, we invited refugee groups into the school to speak to the students, as well as Teenage Support Agencies, and also environmental action groups.

The best eight films (as selected by the students themselves – they voted on the *Justice Citizens Facebook Page*) were then shown at the inaugural Justice Citizens Film Festival. This event, held at a local neighbourhood centre, was introduced by the federal member of parliament, David Bradbury, and had more than 100 guests watch the films and discuss them with the film-makers.

## The Structure of Justice Citizens

One of the strengths of *Justice Citizens* was that it sat outside the normal curriculum; that is, it did not fit into any of the Key Learning Areas like Mathematics or English. This independence allowed it to be much more free in its application. In fact, there was very little in the way of required content to cover. This might seem a luxury in terms of timetabling, but *Justice Citizens* actually replaced the usual 'pastoral care' lessons that were timetabled at the school.

The lessons followed a simple structure. The first set of lessons attempted to engage students' interest in the project. This was done by providing a number of different examples of similar projects from Australia and from around the world. Using a Venn diagram, students also identified issues that they felt were important to them, but also issues that they felt that they could do something about. Interestingly, one of the first findings from this part of the project was that, while the young people taking part in the project acknowledged that it was possible for young people to take action, on a personal level they felt that they were incapable of doing so.

This led into the second part of the project. This was presented as a combination of research and film-making skills. Students had organised themselves into groups of between three and five for the purpose of the making of the films, and they now began to both research the topic they were interested in, and also develop the skills necessary to make the films. Originally, I was concerned that there might be issues with the number of cameras to use, but many students expressed a preference for recording their footage on their mobile phones. The school provided laptops and editing software to assist with this.

To assist with the research side, I organised for a local journalist and film-maker to come in and work with the students, explaining how to craft a 'story', as well as how to ensure that they got the best shots for their films. In addition, the students and I also arranged for specific guests to attend the school to speak about particular issues; thus we had a local refugee worker come in and speak about her work with the Sudanese community, and a teen mother also come in and describe her experiences. Crucially, a number of these incursions were organised by the students themselves, utilising their contacts in the local community. I believe this was another example of the engagement level of the students.



The final part of the project was the making of the films and evaluating them. In total, more than 25 films were completed, and there were another ten that were almost finished. This section of the project probably took the most time, and required the most 'hands-on' assistance from the teaching staff. As stated earlier, many students had not made a film before, and it was necessary to teach them the basics of *iMovie* so that they could make their films successfully. This was mostly done through pre-recorded vodcasts, so that students could watch them repeatedly if needed.

## Findings from Justice Citizens

Before and after the *Justice Citizens* program, I interviewed a selection of the participants. Their thoughts on active citizenship were illuminating, and I drew three main findings from the work.

**Firstly, young people's understanding of citizenship is limited.** Most of the young people I interviewed struggled to understand what was meant by terms like 'active citizenship' or 'global citizenship'. However, after having taken part in the program, not only were students more capable of explaining what was meant by active citizenship, the students also felt that they **were** active citizens – their ideas of active citizenship revolved around an understanding that was predicated on 'taking action' in the community to help those 'who need assistance.' The issue of **social justice** – what it was and how it might be achieved – was more challenging. Most students could identify some examples of social justice issues (bullying and racism being the most common) but they acknowledged the difficulties in dealing with these issues. Most students agreed that their films

wouldn't stop, for example, racism, but they hoped that it would contribute to changing people's minds.

The second interesting finding was what I call the 'follow-on effect' of involvement in the program. A number of students have pursued the topics that they made films about, even after the conclusion of the official *Justice Citizens* program. For example, the students who made films about dirt-bikes are now making films about workshop safety. Another student, who made a film about environmental pollution, has now joined a local environmental group, the *Nepean Waterkeepers*. This suggests that students have gained the confidence, agency and knowledge to take part in other activities related to their interest.

The final interesting finding is the 'knock-on' effect. This is similar to the 'follow-on' effect, but rather than students pursuing their own interests, they appear to have more of an interest in other small-p political issues. Of the students that showed films at the film festival, almost half of them have stood for membership of the *Student Representative Council*. Another group of students have become engaged in local community organisations – like youth and church groups, and even young political groups. In this case, I think that students have gained the agency and knowledge, as well as had their interest in active citizenship stimulated, and they are seeking other avenues to deploy these skills and knowledges.

## Conclusion

By any measure, the *Justice Citizens* project was a great success. During the final interviews, a number of students commented on how they thought it was 'the best subject they had done in high school' and they also reflected on the fact that they 'felt that they knew how to be more active in the communities.'

Personally, I was quite pleased with how effectively the project met my targets of **relevance, engagement** and **technology**.

With regards to the use of film as a medium for communication and encouraging students to take action over local issues, this was more successful than I had ever imagined. I think this probably relates to a lack of understanding on my behalf regarding the viewing habits of young people. Although most of the students involved in *Justice Citizens* had



never made a film before, they were all familiar with *YouTube* – and so they had a conception of the kinds of films that we were making. I was concerned that the quality would not be high enough, but this was not an issue for the students – they were proud of the films because they felt that they could place them on their *YouTube* accounts. After all, not all of the films on *YouTube* are high quality.

Regarding the second of my criteria, that of **relevance**, again I was pleased with the results. By allowing the students to decide on much of the curriculum, the students were able to choose subjects that were of interest to them. It was, of course, necessary to adopt a broad definition of social justice and active citizenship here – and indeed, a broad definition of civics and citizenship education. An example of this was the students who wanted to make a film about dirt bikes. The students in question were interested in this area; working with their teachers, we were able to find an angle that linked dirt bikes with social justice and active citizenship: that of 'dirt bike safety.'

Finally, I have no doubts that the level of **engagement** was also very high. One of the clearest points of evidence for this was the number of students who gave up time after school to complete their films. There were numerous interviews that could only be conducted after school; the majority of students did not hesitate to give up the time, such was their interest in the topic. One point worth noting, however, is that the level of engagement was not uniform; that is, there were some students who were less engaged than their peers. Interestingly, these students were not necessarily the students that would normally be the weakest or most disengaged students;

in fact, these kinds of students were more likely to be engaged than any others. The ones less likely to be engaged were the students who had the least links to the community, and thus could not draw on the expertise from community, family or social group members.

*Justice Citizens* is coming back next year (2013). Currently, I have applied for a grant from Penrith City Council. The nature of the program will be slightly different, involving three local schools instead of just one. In addition, I am seeking more community partners, including a local television station. In the future, we also plan to release an *iTunes U* course and *iBook*. The films will be published on the *Facebook Page*.

**Keith Heggart**

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# Primary Student Voices



Primary school students from Junior School Councils across Victoria over-ran the Victorian Legislative Assembly on November 19th to conduct this year's **State JSC Congress**. The **JSC Congress Program** operates in several regions across Victoria throughout the year (see next page for one example) with all that work culminating in a **State JSC Congress** held in Parliament House itself.

The Congress was officially opened by the Hon Martin Dixon, Minister for Education. The Minister heard the students make some of their opening addresses to Congress and was quick to commend the Congress Members on their professionalism and their conduct, adding that he thought there were at least as many lessons politicians might learn from the students as they could teach.

A total of 61 student representatives from 16 primary school delegations took their seats in the Lower House. The significance and symbolism of the venue and all the associated trappings were not at all lost on the participants. Some students even made reference to the venue in their opening oration, noting the parallel between the purpose of the venue and the task they were undertaking.

The JSC Congress is a parliamentary styled conference where students from Junior School Councils engage in the democratic processes involved with passing a formal motion. The delegates



debate and question each other before casting their final vote on a range of motions that they have designed. This year's central theme was **Going global – the opportunities and challenges of our online world**. What this translated to for the students was a range of ideas about the roles technology could play in the education of students, as well its potential abuses. Cyber bullying was considered extensively under this heading.

## Lead Up

Before attending Congress, each student delegate undertook a research survey of their peers around this theme. Whilst they were only required to survey 20 other students, most delegations took the initiative to consult with many more students. Many younger students, down to grade 1, were directly surveyed. The data were compiled across all schools before the Congress began and each student was issued with a full report of the results to analyse.

## Motions Discussed

The motions moved in Congress are a result of the survey results and the discussion workshops held on the day. The debates and voting in the House never cease to surprise us, as the following decisions show:

1. *That the Education Department should make learning more practical with the use of technology.* **Motion Defeated**
2. *That we should make an online website like Facebook but for younger people so others will not fake their age.* **Motion Defeated**
3. *That every Australian website should monitor and control inappropriate actions or misuses of websites by online users and any continuation of the action should be reported to the police.* **Motion Defeated**
4. *That the government should create a website aimed to stop cyberbullying: one aimed at students and another aimed at informing parents and teachers.* **Motion Carried**
5. *The DEECD should run a mandatory program that all primary schools must take part in fortnightly; the program should be youth-led, as students and presenters would be able to relate to each other.* **Motion Defeated**
6. *That teachers should take classes to learn about the internet and how it works.* **Motion Carried**



7. *That the Education Department should develop a fun game that educates students about Cyber Safety.*

**Motion Defeated**

8. *That the State Government should organise interactive workshops that help Primary students help recognise potentially harmful or misleading websites and users.*

**Motion Carried**

9. *That schools should mix computer and non-computer work so you can get the best of both worlds.*

**Motion Carried**

No adult is permitted to speak or otherwise influence the Congress once the debate has begun, so the role of chairing of the procedures, the 'Speaker' of Congress, is handed over to secondary students from the VicSRC Student Executive. This Year's Speakers were Rachel Cerar, Justine Jaramillo and Marlee-Alice Gorman.



The benefits for students participating in Congress are many but in particular involve a direct and hands-on experience with the democratic process. Students who stand to speak at the microphone in the prestige of the Lower House (and most do) are compelling to be listened to and leave with an added air of confidence. The experience is powerful.

When a student has the floor, the power is theirs to sway the vote. Teachers note this as the 'persuasive language' part of the education and learning outcomes, but the real outcome is that, very often, the vote is swayed by a Congress Member's speech of even just a few seconds. The outcomes of the motions moved in Congress are particularly important because they are not a part of a novelty or practice exercise; they are forwarded to relevant members of the government and opposition, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and other key players, each of whom has stated they are eagerly awaiting the advice of the Congress as they examine the issues of technology in education.



For a copy of the report of the JSC Congress, please contact me at **Second Strike**.

**David Mould**

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## Grampians Region JSC Congress

The Grampians Region of the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development held its **Junior School Council Congress** in Ballarat on October 18th. It focused on the issue of local development and town planning.

Before the Congress, this had been considered by some to be a dry and dull topic for students, but that turned out to be quite untrue. In particular for the students who live in Ballarat, town planning is very much on the agenda; major planning works are underway and the one section of the community who were not being consulted were young people. Primary school students were very aware of this exclusion.

The Speaker of this Congress was Michael Swift of the VicSRC Student Executive.

The students do not vote on motions in a way that can be predicted. Some motions look so appealing to an adult eye that we find it difficult to understand why the vote then turns against them. Whatever the factors students are considering when voting (and more research should be conducted to examine this further), it is a vital part of the Congress process that the

outcome is never to be second-guessed. The students have expressed their will and it is imperative that the outcomes be respected exactly as they are, or else the process would lose all meaning.

### Motions Discussed

Here are their decisions:

1. *That the State Government should install faster and more frequent trains to and from Melbourne.* **Motion Carried**
2. *That the Ballarat Council should provide a place for kids and teenagers in school holidays so they have something to keep them entertained.* **Motion Carried**
3. *That the Ballarat Council should provide more space for parking facilities.* **Motion Carried**
4. *That the Council put CCTV in popular area and monitor the places at all times to put a stop to vandalism.* **Motion Carried**

5. *That the Ballarat City Council place small street lights around Victoria Park and Lake Wendouree for the people who walk, ride or run early in the morning or late at night.* **Motion Carried**

6. *That the local Council should increase the number of parks in the centre of Ballarat and the outskirts of Ballarat.*

**Motion Carried**

7. *The owner/managers of supermarkets should make drive thru supermarkets to follow the successful action of drive thru restaurants.* **Motion Defeated**

8. *The Ballarat Council should create a nature reserve for native animals to live in.*

**Motion Defeated**

9. *That the local Council should put more crossings on the highways so people are safe when crossing the road to get to the park or BMX track.* **Motion Defeated**

10. *That health and safety should put seat belts on busses and public transport to increase safety.* **Motion Carried**





# “And that’s a wrap !”

## *Finishing off 2012 and looking at 2013*



### JUNIOR SCHOOL COUNCIL CONGRESS 2012:

VISTA was pleased to once again facilitate the Teachers’ Workshop as part of the **Victorian Junior School Council Congress** held on the 19th November at the Victorian Parliament House.

Opportunities for SRC Teachers to meet, share ideas and resources and explore solutions to issues are rare and this session was highly valued by those teachers present.

Topics explored during our conversations focused around:

- How to best involve younger students (preps, grade 1s & 2s) in decision making processes;
- Revamping SRCs that are ‘stuck in a rut’;
- Exploring the *Student Action Teams* model as a method of involving more students in decision-making and active participation;
- Supporting beginning or graduate teachers who are often ‘thrown in’ to the role of being the SRC Teacher Adviser;
- Looking at how different SRCs operate their meetings.

The VISTA Executive will be using the feedback received at these sessions to help set the direction for future professional learning and resource development.

### WRAPPING UP:

As the end of the year draws rapidly upon us with the usual demands for wrapping up the school’s year, it’s easy for forget the SRC and the work it has done throughout the year.

- **Celebrate the work** of this year’s SRC members by holding a special event. Some ideas could be an end-of-year party, BBQ, pizza night, movie and popcorn.
- **Present your SRC members with a certificate of participation** as acknowledgement of their contribution to the SRC at your speech night or other end of year events.



- **Provide an SRC Report** on the work of SRC members and include this as part of the students’ end-of-year reports. (*SRC Report Templates* are available for VISTA members to download from our website.)

### MEMBERSHIP FOR 2013:

For those of you who are already VISTA members, our team will be working over the holiday break preparing invoices for your 2013 membership. Be on the lookout for these in early February.

By comparison, VISTA membership continues to remain well below the prices charged by other professional teaching organisations: \$60 a year. (That works out to be \$5 a month!)

We will be reviewing our membership structure and fees in early 2013 so if you’ve been considering joining, get in early and become a member before prices rise. See: <http://srcteachers.ning.com>

### OUR PLANS FOR 2013:

As we enter the Christmas holiday period and are no longer face teaching commitments, this is the time that our VISTA Executive works to plan our future directions for 2013.

Some ideas we hope to explore more in 2013 include:

- How we can better support SRC Teachers in regional and rural areas;
- The feasibility of running an SRC Teachers’ Conference during the latter half of 2013;

- Topics and idea for future episodes of ‘*The VISTA Podcast*’ series (see above);
- Dates for Wine and Cheese Nights and other professional learning sessions.

If there’s an event, resource or issue you would like us to explore further, drop us an e-mail at [vista@srcteachers.org.au](mailto:vista@srcteachers.org.au) so we can look into it !.

### JOIN THE VISTA TEAM IN 2013:

As you reflect on your own professional achievements and the achievements of your Student Council throughout 2011, have you put some thought into your own professional growth and goals for 2013?

Something to consider could be to involve yourself with the VISTA Executive. Our organisation currently receives no funding other than the fees charged through our memberships and it relies heavily on the support of our members to keep the organisation functioning and running. The time commitment is very low (1-2 meetings a term) and your involvement would enable us to take our work further. If this is something you would be interested, please e-mail us at [vista@srcteachers.org.au](mailto:vista@srcteachers.org.au)

On behalf of the team at VISTA, I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We hope you enjoy your (well deserved) break and return ready to face the challenges, demands and possibilities that 2013 will bring.

**Scott Duncan**  
VISTA President



VISTA currently receives no additional funding to operate its programs and relies heavily on memberships to support its programs. Visit us at <http://srcteachers.ning.com> or e-mail us at [vista@srcteachers.org.au](mailto:vista@srcteachers.org.au) for details on how to join.



## VicSRC Executive Summary

The VicSRC Executive are the student representatives, elected annually, who govern the VicSRC. The Executive gives direction to the VicSRC staff, sets policy, makes any announcements to the media, communicates with SRCs and individual students and helps them strengthen and promote the aims of the VicSRC. The VicSRC Executive's job is to represent what is actually being said via Student Councils across the state.

In 2011-12, the VicSRC continued to support and develop SRCs throughout Victoria and to represent the views of secondary students. During this year, we have highlighted the important role of students and their organisations in the areas of teaching and learning, student-teacher relationships, funding for school programs, and Government policy.

Our journey began at Congress 6 in August 2011, where 16 of us were elected by fellow students to become the VicSRC Student Executive for 2011-2012. We began with eleven resolutions ahead of us – decisions made by students at the VicSRC Congress that set our agenda. With many new Executive members, our term of office involved not just meetings and training camps, but also many new experiences and initiatives.

The work of the VicSRC Executive is carried out through our portfolio areas. The Executive members teamed up to take on the resolutions passed at Congress and we decided the allocation of these portfolios at our first camp. In addition to resolution portfolios, operational portfolios were allocated which are involved with the management of the VicSRC (such as government liaison, membership, newsletter, Congress coordinator and website).

One of the biggest and most important projects that came from the Congress 6 resolutions was the development of a 'Teach the Teacher' course: an initiative designed to help students (through their SRCs) to run professional development sessions for teachers within their schools. As a result of the pilot sessions initiated at Melbourne Girls' College and Bundoora Secondary College, a **Represent+** resource has been developed. This will be available on our VicSRC website so that students and SRCs in other schools can offer their own 'Teach the Teacher' programs.

**Represent+** resources have also been developed around several other resolutions that were passed at Congress 6. These will complement our major resource, **Represent!**, and give students ideas for implementation of various initiatives in their own schools.

The Executive has also followed through on the implementation of other resolutions that were passed by students at Congress 6: updating our **Environmental Resource Kit**, advocating for SRC Constitutions and student



representation on School Councils, educating parents about the schooling system, and investigating the effects of the Australian Curriculum implementation.

During 2011-12, we also continued to hold Student Conferences throughout metropolitan and regional Victoria. These have been great occasions to enable students from all around Victoria to discuss student issues, learn from each other's practice, and gain access to new resources. The VicSRC ran four student conferences in metropolitan Melbourne and seven in regional/rural Victoria during term 2, 2012.

In 2011, we began to connect with the Rural Youth Ambassadors, a group of secondary school students from regional Victoria who work closely with the Government on issues surrounding engagement and retention of students in rural education. Having these discussions with rural students enhanced the VicSRC's understanding of particular issues pertaining to rural education. It was important to us to liaise with these students in order to connect with a wider range of students outside metropolitan Melbourne.

The VicSRC is recognised as the peak body representing secondary students in Victoria. Many groups approach the VicSRC for consultations and discussions. Stakeholder Consultations with the VicSRC Executive continued to be held in 2011-12 on topics such as Mathematics and Science teaching in schools, and the teaching of Languages Other Than English. We also had representation to the Federal Productivity

Commission's Roundtable into the Schooling Workforce and made a submission to the Victorian Government about their Teaching Profession paper. These are fabulous opportunities for us to give input on policy in areas where student input may not otherwise exist.

Members of the VicSRC Executive spoke at the Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals' Annual General Meeting, in which we presented the 'Top 5 ways in which Principals can support student representation'. This allowed us to prompt an audience of approximately 100 Principals to consider the role of students in their schools from a different perspective.

The VicSRC is passionate about supporting and recognising the excellent work of SRCs across Victoria. Our primary means of recognising SRC best practice is through our annual VicSRC Recognition Awards. These awards aim to give credit and recognition for the work of SRCs – work that often goes uncelebrated – and the Awards for 2011-12 were presented at Congress 7 by the Hon. Martin Dixon, Victorian Minister for Education.

After one year, our journey as the 2011-2012 VicSRC Executive has come to a close at Congress 7. We would like to thank everyone who has supported us along the way, and wish the 2012-2013 Executive the best of luck on their journey which is just beginning.

### The Executive would like to sincerely thank:

- VicSRC Supporters, volunteers and Congress Crew members, particularly Roger Holdsworth, David Mould, James Tonson, Georgia Kennelly, Lou Mapleston, Megan Shellie, Liz Kalas, David 'Mintie' Rose, Zack Pretlove and Scott Duncan for helping us out throughout the year and particularly during Congress;
- The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development for provide our funding and supporting our voice being heard;
- The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic) for their ongoing support;
- Linda Randall at YACVic, for being a voice of reason and a shoulder to lean on;
- Erin Young for facilitating eleven awesome Regional Student Conferences in 2012;
- All our member schools for getting involved with the work of the VicSRC;
- All schools, students and SRCs that have hosted, participated and assisted with VicSRC events;
- And lastly, the VicSRC Coordinator, Kate Walsh, for all the work you have done helping us achieve our goals, for your dedicated "behind the scenes" work, and for all the effort you have put that has helped to shape the journey of the 2011-12 VicSRC Executive.

**Samantha McClelland**  
on behalf of the 2011-12 VicSRC  
Student Executive



## VicSRC Congress Report 2012

The full report of the VicSRC Congress (August 2012) is now available and has been sent to participating schools. You can also read this report on-line at the VicSRC website: [www.vicsrc.org.au](http://www.vicsrc.org.au)

The article (on these pages) by Samantha McClelland is taken from that report; it summarises the work of the VicSRC Student Executive in 2011-12. The Congress Report also includes full information about resolutions debated and passed at Congress, with arguments presented for and against.

The **VicSRC** receives funding support from the **Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development** and is auspiced by and based at the **Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic)**. It can be reached there on 03 9267 3744 or, for the cost of a local call from outside Melbourne on 1300 727 176; or by email: [coordinator@vicsrc.org.au](mailto:coordinator@vicsrc.org.au)

[www.vicsrc.org.au](http://www.vicsrc.org.au)



# Student and Youth Voice: Asking, Listening, and Taking Action

When **What Kids Can Do (WKCD)** embraced **student voice** as part of our guiding principles in 2001, the idea that youth should be welcomed as crucial investors in improving their schools and communities had few advocates. The research on the power of student engagement was commensurately sparse.

To us, however, it made gut sense to privilege student and youth voice and vision. So for almost twelve years WKCD has supported youth as collaborators: in our books and other publications (eg our 'Fires' series); in survey projects nationwide; in more than 75 grants to student research groups across the globe; and in the feature stories we produce for our website.

We have learned a lot about the complexities of student voice over these years. We've learned that meaningful student voice must:

- Be inclusive, beginning with the premise that everyone has membership;
- Be woven into the daily fabric of school (and reach far beyond after school clubs and 'one-off' events);
- Target substantive issues;
- Involve asking and listening by all parties;
- Lead to constructive action.

One of the hardest challenges is to find the sweet spot between too much and too little adult participation. Too

much adult involvement, and student voice loses its authenticity and its power to involve youth as true problem solvers and stakeholders. Too little, and student voice can become diffuse, exclusive, and ineffective. If young people are to be thoughtful stakeholders in improving teaching and learning, they need adult allies and mentors. And they need attentive adult listeners. It has real value for them to meet and talk without adults present. But our target at WKCD is to energise adults and youth together, in the same room, through conversations and debate.

Those of us who believe in student voice have yet to make a unanimous case for **why** it matters. In a recent WKCD interview, Ari Sussman, who directs the **Student Voice Collaborative** in New York City, said:

*It's surprising how hard it's been to convince some that student voice matters and needs to be a high priority. The link most people make is through engagement, though student voice is somewhat different than engagement, however much they are related, too.*

*The good news is that the academic research clearly shows that student engagement can positively affect 'measurable' outcomes. Kids who take part in decision-making, who meaningfully participate in school, research shows that they're more successful in their academic endeavours, that they score better on tests, that they do better in classes, that they attend school more regularly.*

(Read the full interview, including what gets in the way of student voice, on the opposite page.)

To view WKCD's collection of student and youth voice, see our website:

[www.whatkidscando.org/  
specialcollections/student\\_voice/  
index.html](http://www.whatkidscando.org/specialcollections/student_voice/index.html)

## QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

Please contact us at:  
[info@whatkidscando.org](mailto:info@whatkidscando.org)

*We are deeply grateful to MetLife Foundation, Lumina Foundation for Education, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Surdna Foundation, and the Hewlett Foundation, all of whose generous support has enabled WKCD to show the power of student voice.*

From: [www.whatkidscando.org/  
specialcollections/student\\_voice/index.html](http://www.whatkidscando.org/specialcollections/student_voice/index.html)



# Why student voice matters

*Excerpts from a conversation with Ari Sussman*

It's surprising how hard it's been to make a clear case for why student voice matters. The small circle in and outside academia that's interested in student voice and promoting it has struggled with this for years.

The link most people make is through engagement, though student voice is somewhat different than engagement, however much they are related, too. The good news is that the academic research clearly shows that student engagement can positively affect 'measurable' outcomes. Kids who take part in decision-making, who meaningfully participate in school, research shows that they're more successful in their academic endeavors, that they score better on tests, that they do better in classes, that they attend school more regularly.

But there are so many mediating factors and so many important outcomes beyond test scores that applauding the academic impact is only part of the story.

Those of us who believe in student voice try to demonstrate or explain that, when students feel heard, they feel more valued, and when they feel more valued, they become more motivated to participate in school. We try to make the case that, when students are listened to, they develop better relationships in school and then use those model relationships to develop good, healthy relationships outside of school. We talk about how student voice is the beginning of the process of democratising schools, and

we remind people that if the purpose of school is to prepare young people to make change and to participate in the democracy, then walking them through that process in school increases the chances that, when they leave school, they will know how to exercise democracy and believe in it.

Really, it's hard not to see the benefits of student voice.

## What gets in the way

I think the busy-ness of schools is a big factor. Having been in schools and worked for the system, I'm constantly amazed at how both are such incredibly busy places. In the rush, people understandably become hyper vigilant about tests and compliance. It's easy for student voice to take a back seat when the stakes for testing, school accountability and compliance are so high.

I've learned that even the best-intentioned and most progressive-minded people sometimes need to take a step back and reflect and ask themselves if they are doing the little things that matter and living up to, you know, the vision and the values they hold. I'm lucky to work with some of

the most progressive, hardest working, thoughtful, and creative schools and, even so, it's a challenge to work through the daily busy-ness and the press of mandates and find the time and space to prioritise student voice.

It's so tempting to treat student voice as an add-on. But if there's one thing we've learned, if student voice is to be successful, it must be woven into the everyday fabric of school—it needs to be rooted in meaningful activities and it needs to be routinised. If it's not a routine and if it's not found in all of the areas in which it should be found, then it's just not happening. You can have a student council that mostly plays a token role, that participates in school spirit activities. Don't get me wrong: I'm for this too. But if that's the extent of student voice, then there's a problem. However, if there are decision-making committees in the school and students are part of them, then there's a good chance positive change may happen. If there are classrooms where the direction of the curriculum is decided on a periodic basis as part of a planning committee and students are part of that committee, or there's a process and a protocol within the classroom that supports student voice, then the chances are good that the class will become a place that engages students in learning. But if there's no system, no routine, I fear student voice will fall far short of its potential.



## The principal as the biggest advocate

Another thing is the key role played by the principal. Speaking of busyness, some of the busiest people in the universe are school principals; they have so many responsibilities and burdens and challenges resting on their shoulders. We ask them to be Superman or Superwoman, to make constant choices between how much of the 'chatter' they will listen to and how to prioritise their time and efforts. Their days are exhausting. But if student voice is not part of the principal's routine—not woven into the fabric of the school—then it's not going to happen. It will get lost in the chatter.

We had this idealism when we first started the **Student Voice Collaborative** that a small group of kids in each school could drive change. We quickly learned the students need a larger body of students. They need teachers. And most of all, they need a principal who believes in the importance of student voice—and is its biggest advocate.

I know it's not fair to ask too much of the principal, to expect him or her to spend full time on student voice and student-led school improvement efforts. But if she or he can lay out an infrastructure for how student voice runs through the school, and can assign good teachers and other staff to make student voice a priority, then I think the principal can be present at important times along the way and count on the faculty to make empowering students daily practice.

### Getting the balance right

One of the hardest issues with student voice is getting the balance right between adults taking over versus handing everything over to the kids. I've seen situations where you have student councils, for instance, where the facilitator feels crunched for time or questions

whether students can do it themselves, and so takes on a controlling role and does more than he or she should be doing. Sometimes the adult ends up speaking for students in an effort to increase student voice—and actually squashes it.

**"There's a radical—and wonderful—new idea here... that all children could and should be inventors of their own theories, critics of other people's ideas, analysers of evidence, and makers of their own personal marks on the world."**

*Deborah Meier, educator*

Then there's the other side where you have people who say: "I'm going to make this a completely student voice environment and I'm going to let the kids run this themselves. I'm going to sit in the corner here and the kids can do it." This may be a nice idea in theory, but it doesn't usually work out that way. Kids need adult allies, facilitators, who are able to structure the training and the development and who know when to step up and step back.

It's incessantly challenging to figure out the balance of how much to do and how much not to do. I think everyone who believes in student voice, in empowering students to be active in their education, struggles with balancing adult guidance and student initiative.

### Digging deeper

The term 'student voice' is truly a difficult one, because it doesn't capture completely what we want it to. Over the course of the past year, I've realised a couple things about the term 'student voice'. The idea that we give students voice rather than the fact that students, like us, have a voice of their own, developed or not, skews the process.

The issue isn't giving students voice, but giving them opportunities, forums, places for it to come out. Last year the students and I were making t-shirts for a big event and wanted a motto. One of the students said: "How 'bout for the motto 'The Voice is Yours'?" And I thought to myself: "Oh, that

sounds kind of cheesy."

Then I was like: "Wait a second. That actually kind of hits exactly the centre of what this is about, the fact that students don't need... well, students need adults clearly. They don't need them to give them voice. They

have a voice, and it's about listening."

And speaking about listening, I feel like another struggle with the term 'student voice' is that it focuses on broadcast, the speaking. While students do need time and space to speak, they need to listen as much as teachers. One of the things we're recognising and trying to promote with kids now is that voice is as much about listening as it is speaking, for both students and adults.

Then there's a final issue: **student voice doesn't end with voice**. There has to be an implicit expectation that voice leads toward action, to a collaborative plan for change.

**Ari Sussman**

*Ari Sussman coordinates the Student Voice Collaborative. He also serves as an academic coach with the Children First Network 102.*

from: [www.whatkidscando.org/featurestories/2012/09\\_student\\_voice\\_collaborative/arisussman.html](http://www.whatkidscando.org/featurestories/2012/09_student_voice_collaborative/arisussman.html)

see also: [www.whatkidscando.org/featurestories/2012/09\\_student\\_voice\\_collaborative/pdf/Student-Led%20School%20Improvement.pdf](http://www.whatkidscando.org/featurestories/2012/09_student_voice_collaborative/pdf/Student-Led%20School%20Improvement.pdf)

## Student Voice Research and Practice Facebook Group

[www.facebook.com/groups/studentvoicepage/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/studentvoicepage/)

The articles on these pages came to **Connect's** attention through this recent and open facebook group established by Dana Mitra. It provides a valuable community of people working and interested in this area - in Australia, USA, UK, Italy and elsewhere – as well as access to useful resources and examples, and up-to-date information about initiatives. You can easily log on and join the group at the above address.





# Student Voice Rubric

## Student Voice Collaborative Draft 11.15.12

17 ELEMENTS	6 AREAS					
	School Governance	Classroom Culture	Discipline & Problem Solving	Advisement	Student Activities	Professional Development
1.) Relationship Development			x	x		
2.) Communication and Culture of Listening	x	x	x			
3.) Supportive Staff			x	x	x	x
4.) Collaboration	x	x	x		x	
5.) Encouraging Participation		x		x	x	
6.) Responsive: Student Voice Leads to Action	x					
7.) Contributing to Decisions	x					x
8.) Peer Support Opportunities				x		
9.) Appealing to Students' Lives and Interests				x		
10.) Student Government with True Power	x				x	
11.) Real Leadership Roles	x					
12.) Community-Building			x			
13.) Variety and Choice		x			x	x
14.) Authentic Tasks and Real-World Experiences		x			x	x
15.) Exploring Self, Identity, and Goals			x			
16.) Fostering Self-Advocacy				x		x
17.) Constructivist Learning		x				x

**AREAS** are the most important *places* where student voice can and should be found.

**ELEMENTS** are the most important *qualities* of student voice, which can be found in *all* areas.

**NOTE:** This is a draft student voice rubric from the Student Voice Collaborative in New York City/NYC Department of Education. The students' goal is to have the rubric included in the city's annual school review process; external reviewers would use the rubric to score a school on the extent to which it includes student voice.

**Students are still fleshing out this draft student voice rubric.**

# Student-Centred Education Starts with Student-Led Reform

Students experience the strengths and weaknesses of our schools on a daily basis. Every day, they work with teachers, engage with the curriculum, and negotiate school facilities. Youth – the most talked about constituency in our schools – are on the front lines of school reform, which gives them the unique expertise needed to shape reform work in a meaningful way. Yet seldom are they consulted when the big decisions are made about their schools – decisions that ultimately impact them the most.

In contrast, the work of community-based youth leadership and organising groups understands and positions young people as leaders for both setting change agendas and charting the course for achieving educational improvement. The efforts of three New England (USA) organisations that AISR has worked with – **Youth on Board** in Massachusetts, **Youth In Action** in Rhode Island, and **Young Organizers United** in New Hampshire – offer examples of the practical benefits and promising potential of empowering youth voice in school reform and educational improvement efforts.

In Massachusetts, the student leaders at the **Boston Student Advisory Council (BSAC)**, a partnership between **Youth on Board (YOB)** and the **Boston Public Schools Office of Family and Student Engagement**, organised youth and adults to advocate for and pass regulations that made student feedback a required component of teacher evaluation systems across the state. The campaign's slogan: ***We are the ones in the classroom, ask us!*** resonated with parents, administrators and teachers, as did the youth leaders' desire to use student-to-teacher constructive feedback as a means to promote teacher development, not to punish struggling teachers. Fundamental to BSAC's success was building positive relationships with these key constituencies and – perhaps most significantly – forging a positive partnership with the Boston Teachers Union.

In October 2012, YOB hosted a national convening that brought together stakeholders from ten states to generate national momentum around the importance of positive student-teacher relationships and to promote the constructive use of student feedback in the evaluation of teachers. Currently, YOB is building the base of a national coalition that will ensure the continuation of this type of work across the country.

In Rhode Island, young people at **Youth In Action (YIA)** are starting to apply their organisation's model for adult-supported youth leadership in an effort to improve teacher effectiveness in schools. YIA views and treats youth as co-constructors of the organisation's programs, and values the powerful role that youth can play as agents of change. The organisation has built a local reputation for having expertise in youth leadership and youth development that is now being recognised as important for schools and classroom teachers to understand. Translated into the world of schools, YIA's view of youth leadership means that young people should not only be providing feedback about classroom teacher practice, but also helping to define what should happen in classrooms and how to support teachers to make it happen in the first place. One of the organisation's new efforts is to help classroom teachers understand the power of youth leadership and voice by conducting youth-led teacher trainings. They have developed a partnership with Roger Williams University's teacher education program to help its teachers in training understand what it means to build student-centred classrooms by facilitating professional development workshops led by YIA youth leaders.

In Manchester, New Hampshire, **Young Organizers United (YOU)** works mostly with youth of colour, many of whom are from immigrant and refugee backgrounds. Responding to many stories from their youth leaders about disparate treatment in school or lack of access to educational resources and advising, YOU has been working to ensure that all students, regardless of their racial or cultural background, graduate from Manchester high schools prepared for post-secondary success. Over the past year, YOU has advocated for improvements in ELL

academic programming at the high school level and worked to design and administer student surveys aimed at understanding student experiences with their guidance counselors. They are currently examining data to determine if student enrolment in lower-level classes is disproportionately skewed toward students of colour. All of these focuses stem from listening to the stories of young people who, by virtue of their first-hand experience, are able to identify important challenges facing their schools as a whole.

Like these youth leaders, students across the country have the first-hand knowledge to identify systemic problems, are capable of partnering with adults to assess the validity of their assumptions, and can work on developing reform efforts where they are needed most. When authentically engaged, youth voice adds much-needed perspective on how to best transform the entrenched systems that often drive schools in the wrong direction. Furthermore, as invested stakeholders in their own education, youth leaders are also quite capable of sharing in the tasks and responsibilities associated with education reform work. This means not just being on the receiving end of policy decisions, but helping to make them in the first place; it means not merely receiving instruction from teachers, but helping teachers understand how to do their jobs more effectively; it means listening to youth about the most urgent needs in our schools and trusting that they are invested enough to help shine a guiding light in the right direction for reform.

**Keith Catone and Alexa LeBoeuf**  
*Annenberg Institute for School Reform  
at Brown University, Rhode Island, USA*

from: <http://annenberginstitute.org/commentary/2012/11/student-centered-education-starts-student-led-reform>

## BIG IDEAS Video

The BIG IDEA Session is held annually at the NSW State SRC Conference. This event allows student teams to propose their BIG IDEAS about how to enhance student life. The TOP 3 BIG IDEAS are handed to the NSW SRC for action during their term of office.

You can now view the 2012 BIG IDEA Session at: [www.schools.nsw.edu.au/studentsupport/studleadsrc/studentvoice/index.php](http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/studentsupport/studleadsrc/studentvoice/index.php)

This session was filmed at the 2012 State SRC Conference, *Represent!* Make sure you have sound on! PDFs of the structure and outcomes of the 2012 BIG IDEAS are also available at this site.



Thanks to Diana G and the CLIC team for this professional media product.

Noel Grannall [Noel.Grannall@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:Noel.Grannall@det.nsw.edu.au)



## Connect on Facebook

In order to assist in the transition to the new digital *Connect*, we now have a presence on facebook. Find us at:

[www.facebook.com/pages/Connect/360372760717566](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Connect/360372760717566)

We're already posting some news, links and stories there to complement what you see in the print version of *Connect*. It would be great if you could go there and 'like' us, and watch there for news of *Connect's* availability on-line - for FREE - in mid 2013!

## 'Student Councils and Beyond' On-Line!

We've almost run out of print copies of the first *Connect* publication: *Student Councils and Beyond* (from 2005). And many of the ideas have subsequently been reflected in the *Represent!* kit from the VicSRC ([www.vicsrc.org.au/resources/represent](http://www.vicsrc.org.au/resources/represent)).

So we have made all of *Student Councils and Beyond* (a compilation of articles and resources from many earlier issues of *Connect*) available on-line for FREE. It can be downloaded (as one document or in sections) as PDFs from the *Connect* website. Find it at:

[www.asprinworld.com/connect](http://www.asprinworld.com/connect)



# Connect 2013: from Print to Digital

In April 2013, **Connect** will produce its **final** print publication - with issue 200. However, this does not mean that **Connect** will cease, but simply that it will only be available **electronically** after that date. You will be able to regularly download your own copy of **Connect** from the **Connect/ACER** website (where back copies are currently archived): **research.acer.edu.au/connect/**

The good news is that **Connect** will then become **FREE** at that point: no more subscription costs. Since current subscriptions barely cover printing and postage, without those costs we will be able to meet our commitment to providing information, stories, case studies and resources to the widest audience at no cost.

## How It Will Work

If you have the address of the **Connect/ACER** site, you will be able to simply check it for any new material. However we know that this seldom happens. So we will develop an e-mail 'subscriber' list (free) to notify you when a new issue is posted on the website. This e-mail will contain links to take you to an index of that issue's contents (on the **asprinworld** site) and also directly to a downloadable PDF of that issue (on the **Connect/ACER** site). This e-mail subscription list will open at the start of 2013. A **priority invitation to join that list** will be sent to all current subscribers.

## Current Subscribers

If your subscription expires **before** issue 200 (see your mailing label for this information), we'd ask you to renew your subscription as normal. If your subscription expires **after** issue 200 (and you therefore will have 'credit' with **Connect**), we'll contact you individually to see what you want to do. Options could be to leave the credit as a donation to the work of **Connect**, or receive an earlier issue of **Connect** to discharge paid subscription obligations, or to receive a **Connect** publication in lieu of those issues. We'll send this letter out early in 2013.

## 2012-2013 Issues

At the moment, all issues prior to the last six (ie all but the last 12 months' issues) are already freely available on the **Connect/ACER** website. The process of adding back issues (from 2011 and 2012) will continue, with one issue added every two months until April. Starting in May 2013, we'll then progressively add the remaining issues – approximately one a week – until all issues are on the website in June 2013.

## Content

**Connect** will continue to carry practical stories and resources - from and for primary and secondary schools – about student participatory practices in classrooms and school ... in curriculum, governance, networking, community and so on.

Those stories and resources will continue to be **your** stories. You are encouraged to contribute your experiences and learnings for others to read.

*Connect free, on-line ... starting June 2013*

**All about Student Action Teams, including some hyper-linked mini-case studies, at:**

**[www.asprinworld.com/student\\_action\\_teams](http://www.asprinworld.com/student_action_teams)**

## Rebecca Coyle: A Tribute

We are saddened to report the death of Rebecca Coyle in early November after a year-long battle against illness.

As a teacher at Lynall Hall Community School in the early 1980s, Rebecca established and developed the **Ascolta Radio Group** linking several primary and secondary schools in the Brunswick and Coburg area of Melbourne. Students produced and broadcast regular radio programs about community issues and concerns on Melbourne community stations 3CR and PBS-FM.

This initiative built on the multilingual school-community newspaper **Ascolta** that had operated in the area for several years. It provided a further authentic learning outcome within the curriculum of these schools, was based firmly on active student participation principles, and was a vital part of giving students a real voice about their community.

Rebecca was also centrally involved in the organisation and coordination of a national **Schools in Radio Conference** in Melbourne in 1982 that brought together students, teachers, community and national broadcasters and others interested in this area of the media. It was a vital and important initiative in establishing the curriculum legitimacy of such approaches and providing practical assistance to projects throughout Australia. The two issues of **Connect** that Rebecca co-edited around that Conference still provide valuable examples and resources (see references to their availability below).

These experiences with the **Ascolta Radio Group** established Rebecca's life-long interest in radio, and she worked to establish community radio in the UK and subsequently taught at a tertiary level in this area at both Macquarie and Southern Cross Universities.

### Find:

**Connect 12** (December 1981) at:

<http://research.acer.edu.au/connect/vol1981/iss12/> and

**Connect 13-14** (February-April 1982) at:

<http://research.acer.edu.au/connect/vol1982/iss14/>

At the time of her death, Rebecca was Associate Professor in the School of Arts and Social Sciences at Southern Cross University in Lismore, NSW where her interests, teaching, publications and research included radio production, holographic art, sound art, country music and documentary film. Over the past decade she has been acknowledged as a leading international scholar in the area of screen music and sound.

Rebecca also maintained a strong interest in and commitment to student participation, providing leads for articles in **Connect** around practices in schools in her area. She was highly important to the development of **Connect** and we all miss her greatly.

Roger Holdsworth



Connect 17, October 1982



# The Student Voice Handbook:

## *Bridging the Academic/Practitioner Divide*

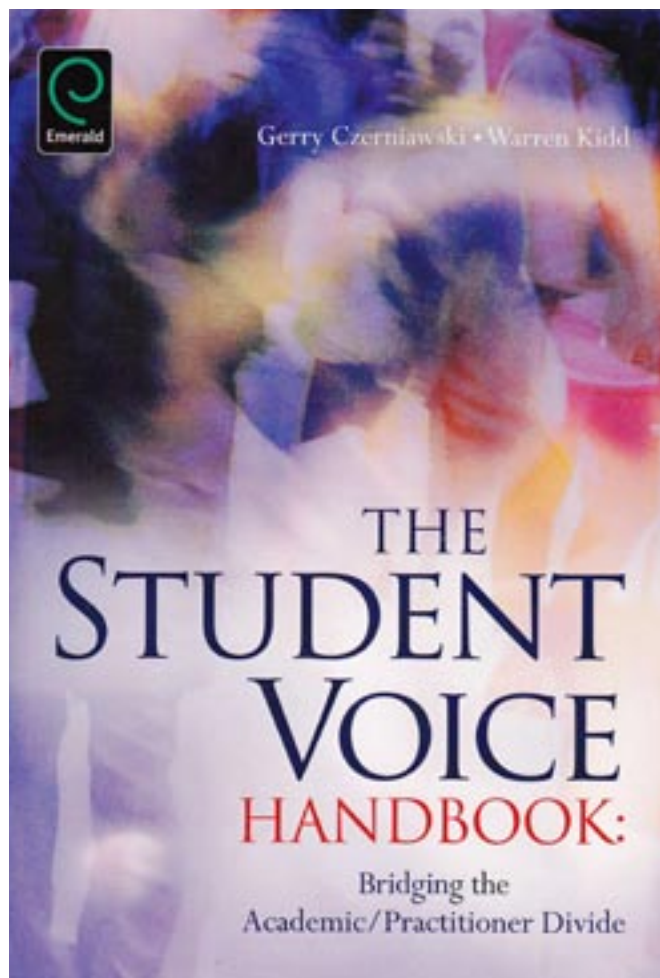
Edited by Gerry Czerniawski and Warren Kidd;  
Emerald Group Publishing, 2011  
ISBN: 978-1-78052-040-7

Ideas about 'Student Voice' have century-long influences, but the substantial growth in both theory and documented practice in this area is a relatively recent (and current) phenomenon. This is a field that therefore still struggles with terminology; while we have explored ideas of 'student participation' for several decades, we now also read variously about student voice, engagement, empowerment and so on. As Michael Fielding has noted, 'student voice' has become a 'portmanteau term', carrying lots of different ideas and baggage within its nuances.

It is also an area where practice and theory significantly inform each other, where reflection on practice helps to tease out meanings, and arguments about conflicted purposes challenge appropriate practice. 'Student voice' work remains an area where exciting possibilities exist for practitioners (including students) and theorists to construct useful meaning together - and in fact the very nature of its radical practice may rest upon those collaborative relationships. Yet those different locations and roles can also lead to separated developments of language and concepts, and concerns remain about the appropriation of student voice ideas within oppressive policy agendas.

Into this context comes this highly useful handbook edited by Gerry Czerniawski and Warren Kidd. The chapters that comprise **The Student Voice Handbook** developed from presentations at an event in London (UK) in 2009: *Listening to Learners: Partnerships in Action*. This brought together academics, practitioners, policy-makers and learners in a desire to bridge the 'divide' between diverse voices.

The Handbook therefore is structured into several 'semi-permeable' sections, which comment on each other, draw on each other's experiences, and bleed ideas across boundaries. The more theoretical section that starts the Handbook draws explicitly on radical practices - both in Michael Fielding's work on 'forgotten histories' that informs his 'patterns of partnership' (see the article in the last issue of **Connect**), and also in Pat Thomson's conceptual outline of the ways in which 'voice' has been used and limited. Specific UK experiences are also drawn on here in reflections on the changing policy landscape - around 'Every Child Matters' and the citizenship agenda - and the implications of policy changes for the ways in which students and their voices are constructed.



The second part focuses more explicitly on 'student voice in practice', taking a broadly developmental structure - with chapters outlining practices in early childhood, primary/elementary schools, secondary schools, and then in post-compulsory and higher education. These provide some fascinating glimpses of what is happening in individual classrooms, across whole schools, within specific programs (eg with students as researchers) and through specific orientations towards negotiating learning and teaching. Yet here, the same theoretical concerns and debates rage, though sometimes more submerged: why are we doing this? whose interests does student voice work serve? There is an awareness that the practicalities of what we do is essentially bound to the *purposes* of our work: as the introduction to the Handbook notes (p xxxvi): "with social justice and democracy ... as a mechanism for school and college improvement ... as a controlling agent ... [or] providing 'efficiency



gains' which aid and legitimise competition ... leading to increased marketisation ... What do we do, and how do we do it, when our everyday practices are framed within this contention?

Part 3 opens up issues about the role of student voice in informing teachers' professional practice, both within schools and also within teacher training institutions. It canvasses approaches where students are 'setting the learning agenda', and 'developing partnerships' – going far beyond the instrumental limitations of some uses of 'student voice'. It is interesting to reflect on current Australian initiatives in this area that stack up well against those documented in the Handbook: the *Teach the Teacher* and *Learning Partnerships* approaches, both documented recently in *Connect* (see #192, ##194-5), add valuable perspectives to those included here.

Issues about student voice have also surfaced in recent studies that reflect on participant roles within various research methodologies. There has been debate about validation and 'ventriloquism', and on the degree to which researchers (and teachers and others) actually *hear* student voices; debate has highlighted the need to examine which voices are privileged and how this happens. So Part 4 of the Handbook is concerned with the research methodologies involved in 'capturing' student voice.

While the Handbook is unapologetically located within the British experience, and directed towards a British readership, it notes from the start that the interest and work in student voice has a broad international base. Hence the final part of the Handbook touches on some of this international experience, with contributions from the US, Africa, Australia, Sweden, China and Brazil. These provide some useful perspectives, but perhaps can only give limited snapshots of how student voice plays out in other cultural contexts. Volume 2 of such a Handbook (if there is to be one) would benefit from a broader accumulation of global perspectives, both on practice but also on some of the differing cultural influences on theoretical issues. Within the 'participation' literature, it has been the challenges provided within cross-cultural contexts that has driven debates forward.

In their final chapter, Gerry Czerniawski and Warren Kidd write persuasively about the contradictions inherent in school systems that promote notions of democracy and citizenship, yet "violate the very rights of many of those who are in a position to carry that project forward" (p 430). They tie ideas of student voice into other discourses about 'trust' and social capital, and further raise questions of the purpose of what we do. They argue strongly for the transformative possibilities of student voice and celebrate the integrity and passion of the 'student voice movement'.

The Handbook also opens up possibilities for its further development, particularly in the area of student or 'learner' voices reporting and reflecting on the nature of 'student voice' itself. Here those voices remain mediated through the words and interpretations of academics, teachers or other practitioners. The content of student voice – what it is about – varies from feedback to teachers and policy-makers, to student (and youth) action on local issues or educational practices. Yet seldom are student voices reflective on the nature of student voice itself. That remains a serious divide.

This Handbook is an invaluable companion for all those seriously interested in **Student Voice** – to help us to think about practices, clarify intentions and ideas, and warn against abuses of the ideas. You can read it seriously - or dip into it according to need. You should find at least one chapter that directly resonates with your own experience and situation – and hopefully be led to read more in order to challenge ideas ... and further develop practices.

**Roger Holdsworth**

## Broken Hill High School Student Environmental Council

**The Broken Hill High School Student Environmental Council (SEC)** is an organisation running at BHHS (NSW) to help the environment by engaging in many environmental practices, programs, projects and fundraisers.

### Mission

The BHHS SEC's mission is to simply improve Broken Hill High School's environmental state with projects, programs and fundraisers whilst educating the school with environmental practices and procedures.

### Description

The BHHS SEC is a student-based organisation consisting of approximately 20 members. It was founded on 11th October 2012 and we have many goals and ideas which we will implement into Broken Hill High School in 2013. Our members range from Years 7 to 12 and we are all keen environmentalists who all have a common goal: to make Broken Hill High School look better and benefit environmentally. It is easy to join the SEC; just attend one of our weekly meetings and we will issue you with a sign up form.

### Contact

[www.facebook.com/](http://www.facebook.com/BrokenHillHighStudentEnvironmentalCouncil)

[BrokenHillHighStudentEnvironmentalCouncil](https://www.facebook.com/BrokenHillHighStudentEnvironmentalCouncil)

**Dylan Stone**

[Dylan.stone@education.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Dylan.stone@education.nsw.gov.au)



# Connect Publications: Order Form

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To: **Connect**, 12 Brooke Street, Northcote VIC 3070 Australia  
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... copies	<i>SRC Pamphlets Set (1988)</i> (2 sets available) \$	\$ 5.50	\$ 5.50	\$ .....

(\$ check availability before ordering; \* discounted rate for current and new subscribers to **Connect**)

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## ASPRINworld: the *Connect* website!

[www.asprinworld.com/Connect](http://www.asprinworld.com/Connect)

*Connect* has a website at **ASPRINworld**; **ASPRIN** is the *Australian Student Participation Resource and Information Network* ("a cure for your student participation headaches") – a still-emerging concept. The *Connect* section of the website is slowly growing, with information about subscribing, recent back issue contents and summaries of and order information for *Student Councils and Beyond*, *Student Action Teams*, *Reaching High* and *Switched On to Learning*. There are also links from the indexes of recent issues to their archived PDFs (see below).

*Connect* is now also  
archived and available electronically:  
[research.acer.edu.au/connect](http://research.acer.edu.au/connect)

All issues of *Connect* are being archived through the ACER Research Repository: **ACEReSearch**. *Connect* issues from #1 to #180 are available for **free** download, and recent issues can be searched by key terms. See the **ASPRINworld** site for index details of recent issues, then link to and download the whole issue you are interested in.

[www.informit.com.au](http://www.informit.com.au)

In addition, current and recent issues of *Connect* are now available on-line to libraries and others who subscribe to RMIT's **Informit** site – a site that contains databases of many Australian publications. You can access whole issues of *Connect* as well as individual articles. Costs apply, either by a library subscription to **Informit**'s databases, or through individual payments per view for articles.

[www.asprinworld.com/connect](http://www.asprinworld.com/connect)  
&  
[research.acer.edu.au/connect/](http://research.acer.edu.au/connect/)



## Local and Overseas Publications Received

*Connect* receives many publications directly or indirectly relevant to youth and student participation. We can't lend or sell these, but if you want to look at or use them, contact us on:

(03) 9489 9052 or (03) 8344 9637

### Australian:

**Inspire** (DEECD, Melbourne, Vic) Issue 10: November 2012

**Research Developments** (Australian Council for Educational Research, Camberwell, Vic) No 28; Summer 2012-2013

**TLN Journal** (Teacher Learning Network, Abbotsford, Vic) Vol 19, No 3; Spring 2012

**Towards Victoria as a Learning Community** (DEECD, Vic) November, 2012

**Two Way Street: Young People Informing Improvements to Schools and Youth Services** (Linda Randall, Lisa Morstyn and Kate Walsh; Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, Melbourne, Vic) October, 2012

**VicSRC Congress Report 2012** (VicSRC, Melbourne, Vic)

**YACVic Annual Report 2011-2012** (Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, Melbourne, Vic) November 2012

**YAPRap** (YAPA, Surry Hills, NSW) December 2012 - January 2013

**Yikes** (Youth Affairs Council of Victoria, Melbourne, Vic) Vol 10 Edition 5; October 2012

### International:

**Rethinking Schools** (Milwaukee, WI, USA) Vol 27 No 1; Fall 2012

**The Student Voice Handbook: Bridging the Academic/Practitioner Divide** (ed: Gerry Czerniawski and Warren Kidd; Emerald: UK) 2011

**Youth Have Their Say on Internet Governance** (Nordic Youth Forum at EuroDIG, Stockholm; International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media, University of Gothenburg, Göteborg, Sweden) June 2012

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# Connect On-Line!

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form: page 22

Back issues of **Connect** from 1979 to the end of 2011 (that's 32 years! – from #1 to #192) are now all freely available on-line! Thanks to the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), back issues of **Connect** have been scanned or up-loaded and are now on the ACER's Research Repository: **ACEReSearch**.

You can find these issues of **Connect** at:

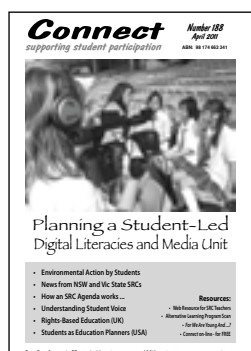
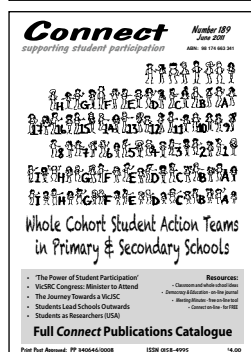
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The left-hand menu provides a pull-down menu for you to select the issue number > **browse**; the front cover of the issue is displayed, and you can simply click on the link in the main body of the page to download a PDF of the issue. Recent issues are also searchable by key words.

## Availability

The most recent 12 months of **Connect** (ie the last 6 issues) will continue to be available **ONLY by subscription until April 2013**. These issues will then be progressively added to this site and new issues made freely available there from June 2013.

This ensures that **Connect** maintains its commitment to the sharing of ideas, stories, approaches and resources about active student participation.



## Let us know

There may be some gaps or improvements necessary. As you use this resource, let us know what you find. (If an issue of **Connect** seems to be missing, check the issues either side, as **double issues** show up only as one issue number.) If you have any ideas for improving this resource, please let us know.

**Most importantly, please USE this resource.**

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